

this evidence has been ignored by Mrs Rhine. Mrs Rhine briefly retorts that she was not drawing conclusions and that she does not think one can make proofs out of spontaneous cases.

That, of course, is the position which has often been stated by Mrs Rhine but an exploratory study in which one is drawing no conclusions needs a careful choice of words. Perhaps Mrs Rhine was a little misrepresented by the Editorial summary at the beginning of her paper where it is said that 'the suggestion . . . is that hallucinatory experiences as such have no necessary bearing on the survival issue'. This could perhaps have been stated in a form less open to Hornell Hart's criticism as, for example, that she 'found no bearing on the survival issue in her study of spontaneous cases', leaving open the question of whether other ways of studying apparitions might have such a bearing.

R. H. THOULESS

PROBABILITY AND SCIENTIFIC INFERENCE. By G. Spencer Brown.
London, Longmans. 1957. 154 pp. 15s.

We hope to include a comprehensive critique by Christopher Scott in our next issue.—Ed.

RUDI SCHNEIDER RECOLLECTIONS AND COMMENTS

- I. T. BESTERMAN
- II. K. M. GOLDNEY
- III. C. C. L. GREGORY
- IV. LORD CHARLES HOPE

I

I HAD a very large number of sittings (perhaps 200 in all) with Rudi Schneider over a period of several years, in Braunau, Weyer, Munich, Paris and London. These sittings made a pattern justifying the worst inferences. At Weyer, where I had no control over the conditions, except such as was provided by the presence of Lord Charles Hope and one or two other reliable persons, I saw several very striking 'phenomena'. At Braunau I had a little more control, for the sittings were held in an ordinary house, which could be summarily examined; here again one or two reliable people, of whom Dr Gerda Walther was one, were present; some incidents occurred, but of a relatively minor nature. (I say nothing

of the Munich sittings, for Baron von Schrenck-Notzing conducted them in a completely unventilated room kept at a high temperature, and I was usually too faint to be fully aware of what was going on.) In Paris, the sittings were held at the Institut Métapsychique under the direction of Dr Osty ; I participated in the arrangements, but of course it was Osty who laid out the apparatus and controlled it ; a few very minor disturbances were heard and seen, and recorded by the oscillograph. Finally, a long series of sittings was held at the S.P.R. under my complete control (and that of Oliver Gatty, whose death soon after was a terrible blow) ; and in these nothing whatever even remotely paranormal was observed.

In other words, one would be entitled to conclude that 'phenomena' occurred in the absence of control, and diminished to the exact extent that control increased, and this over a period of years and a large number of sittings in different places. Clearly, nothing could be more suspicious. Yet if anything is certain about these sittings it is that Rudi himself did not produce such 'phenomena' as did take place. On this point I am perfectly clear. And apart from this I could see no sign in Rudi during the years I knew him of anything other than a great simplicity of nature and character. Not even the adulation of the foolish, the deplorable behaviour of people like Schrenck-Notzing and Harry Price, and my own sceptical severities (which he understood and welcomed as did no other medium I ever encountered) appeared to affect his natural equanimity. He gave every indication of being an entirely normal and well-balanced person. It must be admitted that this was at least in part the result of very limited intellectual capacity, but this does not effect the main point, it even reinforces it.

It is my earnest hope that the very voluminous material still available on Rudi's mediumship will be assembled before it is too late, and that its history will be written.

T. BESTERMAN

II

RUDI Schneider is second to none in interest to psychical researchers. This is due in great part to the fact that he never objected to any or every sort of experimental control that might be suggested. Indeed, he usually evinced little interest in such matters, placing confidence in his experimenters and leaving the technique and development of his sittings in their hands.

In his Presidential Address to this Society in 1937 (*Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. XLV), speaking of the graphs obtained by MM.

Eugène and Marcel Osty at the Institut Métapsychique in Paris which appeared to demonstrate an exteriorisation of some sort of psychic force from Rudi causing obscuration of an infra-red ray, Lord Rayleigh, Sc.D., LL.D., F.R.S., stated :

These graphs published by MM. Osty are in my view one of the most valuable contributions ever made to our subject. The critics who have discussed their work adversely appear to me to have totally failed to face up to them.

Dr Eugène Osty himself, after his prolonged series of experiments with Rudi, says in his 1933 Myers Memorial Lecture (translated by Mr Theodore Besterman under the title *Super-normal Aspects of Energy and Matter*) :

In brief, the only persons who can be suspected of fraud are the investigators themselves—that is, my son and I. Anyone who is daring enough to raise the question of any other kind of fraud under these conditions either cannot have read our report or is incapable of understanding it.

I remember vividly my first sittings with Rudi at his home in Braunau, when I visited him and his family with Harry Price and a couple of other investigators. Others may have shared the reactions I experienced at these first sittings : the initial incredulous interest aroused by what one heard about the phenomena; the hour or so before a sitting spent in tightening up the experimental conditions so far as possible in the circumstances; the astonishment with which one witnessed the occurrence of the phenomena oneself if one was lucky enough to obtain a really good sitting ; and then the reaction next day when one preferred to doubt one's own sobriety rather than accept the genuine nature of the phenomena, which one had seemed forced to admit at the time ; a determination to be more observant at the next sitting ; and again next time seeing no means by which the phenomena as a whole could have been fraudulently produced without postulating preposterous theories of fraudulent complicity amongst several of the investigators themselves. I think it is a fact that no one who has had, say, a dozen really good sittings with Rudi, has been led to a belief that he was fraudulent ; and conversely, those who put forward a theory of fraud on his part were those who had had merely one or two sittings and these without particularly good phenomena.

I was lucky enough in Braunau to witness the curious 'fog' which has been described by Osty (op. cit) :

I was once able . . . to see, in good red light and from very near, a sort of dense fog making its way towards a table, which moved beneath the

eyes of all those present as soon as this fog reached it. . . . A number of observations . . . incline me to believe that it is the fog-like phase, visible in red light, which is necessary for the production of telekinesis.

Whereas telekinetic effects were common however, this visible 'fog' was a rare occurrence. On the Braunau occasion it seemed to advance across the small living room from the side furthest from the tactually-controlled medium, much as a Scotch mist advances across a moor, obliterating each object as it passed ; and then seemed to recede in the direction from whence it had come.

Rudi's trance personality, Olga, was a capricious, prima-donna-like lady! Undeterred in producing brilliant phenomena by the presence of scepticism or hostility amongst her sitters, she was also ready to select a friendly one as the 'cause' of blank sittings when these persisted, and then belie her own assertions by focussing the phenomena continuously around the scapegoat on another occasion. Dr William Brown and I both shared this experience in the London series of experiments.

Of Harry Price's isolated accusation of fraud against Rudi (see Bulletin IV of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, London 1933), I will not say more than that it was insincere and that the reputation that was harmed was not Rudi's in the minds of those who knew the facts. In a letter to me only a few days before his death Price wrote : 'I will stress the fact that Rudi's phenomena were genuine—as I have stated so many times in my books.' (See Osty's 'L'Étrange Conduite de M. Harry Price,' *Revue Métapsychique*, Paris, 1933.)

Granted a bias towards incredulity, I look back upon sittings with Rudi as some of the most interesting and dramatic experiences I have ever had. Had the later-developed infra-red viewer been available when Rudi's phenomena were at their height during the investigations in this country, in France, and in Germany, one ventures to hope that the question of the authenticity of the physical phenomena of mediumship might have been given a final answer.

K. M. GOLDNEY

III

ONCE 'reasonable' doubt has been cast upon any historical event whatever, it is impossible to prove conclusively that this event has ever occurred. Nevertheless in most cases the occurrence may be *inferred* with a very high degree of probability, even when no connective theory is available. This arises from the fact that occurrences, or even the statements that some things have or have

not happened, are not the kind of things which admit of *proof*, at least in the strict mathematical sense of the word. In the usual course of events we are accustomed to accept what seems 'reasonable' at the time and locality at which we happen to be, although what is easy of belief at one time and place can be almost impossible at another. For example, the Roman historian Livy reported that, on a certain day in November, all the stars in the sky left their places and dashed across to new locations, while cocks turned into hens and hens turned into cocks. On theoretical grounds we are disinclined to credit Livy's story so far as it concerns the farmyard, but to accept it as regards the celestial phenomena as at least a poetical description of what can be observed when the earth passes through a comet.

So long as paranormal events are regarded as non-existent or at least rare occurrences, and as devoid of all rational connective theory, they are likely to remain of little general interest except to those people who find them significant for a spiritualistic interpretation of the world. If people could be neatly divided into spiritualists and materialists, paranormal phenomena would not be likely to raise any controversy, because to the spiritualists they would seem natural and require no special explanation, whereas to materialists all such phenomena would be impossible in principle, and therefore impossible to demonstrate.

Demonstration is, of course, empirical; it is convincing (apart from theory) according to the completeness and consistency of the recipe for its reproduction. Thus, the perfectly repeatable scientific experiment can be used as a device for bridging the logical gap between theoretical prediction from a model or calculus, and concrete empirical happenings.

The major achievements of science, in contrast to technological discoveries, have been the bridging of logical gaps between systems of ideas; the greater the gap bridged the greater is the scientific discovery, and the more intense the 'eureka' feeling when it has been successfully bridged.

The greatest logical gap of our time is that between persons and things. This gap has already been partly bridged by means of the biological sciences, although there is still a considerable gap at the level of microbiology. The great difficulty we have in believing that parapsychical phenomena really happen (in spite of the very considerable evidence to the effect that they do) is that they appear to jump the biological gap, at least in so far as they cannot be accounted for by known bodily processes. When a person who intends to move an object does so, and then understands that he has accomplished this feat, there does not seem to be anything

strange about it because we are accustomed to such occurrences and are content to believe that the so far unknown biological processes involved will one day be explained in a theoretically satisfactory manner.

Investigation of a physical medium such as Rudi Schneider should be undertaken at two different levels. The first consideration is the behaviour of Rudi as a person or *persons*, and this requires a scientific knowledge of personality which, as a scientific discipline, is almost non-existent : as Professor Mace has recently put it (1), personality theory constitutes the untidiest part of the untidiest science. In the second place there is the investigation of movements of objects such as toys, curtains, handkerchiefs etc., and the recording galvanometer registrations of the partial occultations of enclosed infra-red light beams. In this respect the late Lord Rayleigh, once professor of physics at the Imperial College, wrote (2):

A good deal has been said at different times about Schneider being able to release a hand for the fraudulent production of the phenomena. Even if there is evidence that he has occasionally done this, I confess it seems to me absurd to argue as if a man with each hand or arm firmly grasped by a hand of a trustworthy controller in the prime of life might be regarded as virtually free.

On one occasion when I was present there was a movement of the curtains, as evidenced by the noise of the bells attached to them. No one was there on that occasion whom I could regard as a possible confederate of the medium.

So long as the supposed parapsychical events are no more than curtain and galvanometer movements, it is always *possible* to explain them as being normally caused in some unknown way by the medium, or someone else present, perhaps by some clever feat of legerdemain or by a skilful diversion of the attention of the investigators. Even if such movements were observed under perfect conditions, so long as they were not ordered in a way which suggested purpose and design they could perhaps be provisionally 'allowed' by scientists as being due to some kind of rare and unknown body emanations from the medium. What was far more disturbing, in the case of Rudi, was that hand-like or limb-like objects were occasionally observed ; handkerchiefs were tied into knots, pulled from the grasp of sitters and thrown about the room. Photographs were obtained, in ordinary white light, of handkerchiefs in the air without physical support and, in at least one case, a large hanging curtain was depicted lying along the ceiling.

To those who have never investigated such odd happenings it might be thought that at least an expert opinion could be obtained

as to whether such things did or did not occur. It is unusual to find even one person who is well qualified in both science and psychiatry : when Rudi was investigated by scientists, a quarter of a century ago, there was fortunately one man interested in the phenomena whose almost unique qualifications constituted him an expert in both the mental and the physical realms. The late Dr William Brown had these qualifications and, moreover, was fortunate enough to observe what appeared to be a *pseudopod* in the presence of Rudi Schneider, Professor Fraser-Harris (physiologist), Mr C. V. C. Herbert (sometime research officer of the Society) and several others. Brown and Harris reported their observations in letters to *The Times* and it might perhaps have been thought that these remarkable observations would have constituted an example of a significant paranormal occurrence. The accounts of these observations, however, were unpalatable, not only to most of the leading physicists, but also are now to the majority of contemporary psychical researchers. The result of Brown's action on academic opinion at Oxford is well shown by the following letter from Lord Charles Hope to the writer, which on account of its importance in connection with further investigations, is here quoted in full :

26A North Audley Street, W. 1. 13/5/32. Dear Gregory
Thank you very much for your letter. I too think there is almost no doubt that Rudi can produce genuine phenomena. It is a great pity we could not have the proposed sittings but I still hope it may be managed later on. You have, perhaps, seen Dr William Brown's and Fraser-Harris's letters¹ which appeared in the *Times* last week. I enclose the cuttings in case you did not. Will you please return them. Dr Brown was very displeased at being 'starred' in the *Daily Mail* on the front page. I was sorry too but did not feel responsible, as for this series he went to Price's at P's invitation and not at mine.

Dr Brown has since then been having rather a time of it at Oxford being laughed at by Lindemann and even Einstein among others. Of course they will not even hear of such phenomena being genuine.

Do you feel, without in any way inconveniencing yourself, it would be possible for you to give a short resumé of the infra-red experiments which we did so that Brown could show it to one or two people. I know its not the sort of thing that is exactly pleasant to do but as Dr B. was never present at any successful experiment with the infra-red apparatus he is without what, in conjunction with the Osty report (3), is really the most acceptable part of our experiences with Rudi, speaking in a more scientific way.

¹ Dr Brown subsequently adopted a more non-committal attitude to the phenomena and repudiated this letter : the result of the disclosure of the unreliability of Harry Price as a scientific investigator.—Ed.

I know Brown would really like to mention something about it in a paper he is reading at Oxford (to the Psychological Society I think it is) about June 1, but even if you would prefer your name not to be mentioned at that meeting I know he would like to be able to mention it privately.

I could send him the rough sketch of the apparatus done by Peter [C. V. C. Herbert] and for what it would be worth Peter and I could add a very short account of our experiences in that direction. Of course I see, if you do anything, you must be very careful what you say. We could point out that the experiments were not really under our unique control but at the same time say it is difficult to suggest how fraud could have been responsible for the 'interferences' noted.

Huxley¹ seems to be really interested at last which is all to the good but of course he has had no direct experience. He is very keen to do everything possible to help Osty to continue his experiments with Rudi. I agree it seems the best chance of more being discovered but I still think a series of sittings such as I had in mind would do a lot towards getting Osty's last report and any future report of his accepted in scientific circles. So 'entre nous' I am still fishing for Rudi.

Yours v. sincerely (signed) Charles Hope.

Lord Charles Hope imagined, like the founders of our Society, that it might be possible to carry out, with the aid of such scientists as he could muster for the purpose, a new and independent investigation of Rudi which would avoid all those features of former investigations which critics had found objectionable, and at the same time test the feasibility of all 'explanations' of the phenomena which had been put forward by previous investigators. Objections had been raised to Osty's investigation of Rudi in Paris because the laboratory reports did not mention the names of all who were present at each separate sitting. In the subsequent Hope-Rayleigh investigation of Rudi (2) very full notes of what occurred were taken at the time and copies sent to each investigator for verification (and correction if necessary) after each sitting. It is to be hoped that one day these notes will be published in full, together with a more comprehensive account of Rudi Schneider's mediumship than is at present available in any single work. Once it is realized that *fraud* and '*the spirits*' are by no means the only explanations of parapsychical phenomena, their acceptance and rejection may, it is to be hoped, depend more on the expert opinion of investigating scientists than on the emotions and prejudices of parapsychological historians (4).

After considerable experience of the many difficulties to be encountered in the investigation of physical mediumship, the

¹ It appears Julian Huxley was never present at a séance and had expressed no personal views as to the genuineness of the phenomena.—Ed

writer rather reluctantly concludes that, in spite of so much careful work by many scientists, often undertaken at great risk to their reputation, there is still no universally compelling evidence of levitation and materialization even in the case of Rudi Schneider, only considerable probability. Nevertheless, he is *himself* convinced of the genuineness of the Rudi phenomena, largely as a result of all the detailed questioning by sceptical scientists to which he was (very willingly) subjected, principally in the Staff Common Room at University College; also, to some extent, as a result of his confidence in, and long experience with Mr C. V. C. Herbert, who was responsible for 'the scientific part of the work as regards its physical aspect' during the Hope-Rayleigh investigations in 1932.

C. C. L. GREGORY

REFERENCES

- (1) *The New Scientist*, 29 August 1957.
- (2) *Proc. S.P.R.*, Part 131, Vol. XLI, June 1933.
- (3) *Revue Métapsychique*, 1931, No. 6.
Revue Métapsychique, 1932, No. 2.
Revue Métapsychique, 1933, April.
- (4) Rawcliffe, D. H., *The Psychology of the Occult* (1952).

IV

I WAS sorry to hear of the death of Rudi Schneider. I always found him pleasant and easy to deal with. His own belief in his unusual powers was, I think, quite genuine and his conviction that 'Olga' his 'control', was a separate entity, was complete. This conviction I did not share but, though I often tried to find out if he had any recollection of what had taken place during trance, I never succeeded, nor did others of my friends who were able to talk with him in German. 'Olga', however, showed signs of knowing what Rudi knew in his ordinary life. 'She' denied having any knowledge of English but probably shared with Rudi a limited grasp of that language.

I first met Rudi in April 1929. There were two series of sittings that year under Harry Price at his National Laboratory of Psychical Research in Queensberry Place, the second and longer series extending into 1930. I attended a few sittings in Paris in 1930-1 when he was being examined by Dr Eugène Osty using infra-red rays. In 1932 there was a long series with Harry Price. In October of that year a series was held under my direction mostly in the house of the Dowager Lady Rayleigh.

Interesting and, in my opinion, impressive phenomena were observed at all these sittings but there was also a steady increase of negative results. This was due, according to some critics, to the increasing vigilance on the part of the investigators which gave a decreasing opportunity for trickery. I do not concur with that view. I did not at the time and have had no reason since to change my opinion. Nor am I prepared to discount the results obtained at the National Laboratory although the experiments there were carried out under Harry Price whose methods have given rise to serious criticisms.

It has been suggested that the smaller effects were obtained by the medium himself by trick methods but the larger and more complicated phenomena were performed by an accomplice hidden behind the cabinet curtains. That theory will not hold water. To suppose that an accomplice could have entered and left the room through a locked door, moved in and out of the cabinet, while the sitters blocked the way, I am quite unable to accept. Such an explanation might be conceivable in the medium's own home, but not under the conditions obtaining at the National Laboratory.

The subsequent long series held in 1933 and 1934 by Theodore Besterman and Oliver Gatty at the S.P.R. were almost or quite negative. The precautionary measures taken at these sittings did not differ to any considerable extent from those taken by me in 1932, nor, for that matter, from those held at the National Laboratory. In Vienna, in 1935-6, Dr G. A. Schweiger, Head Engineer of the Broadcasting Station, directed altogether 78 sittings with Rudi. They were, I believe, conducted scientifically and the results obtained rivalled those obtained in the earlier years, thus indicating that under sympathetic conditions Rudi was still able to produce impressive phenomena.

C. M. HOPE

EDWARD OSBORN: A REMINISCENCE

I KNEW the late Edward Osborn through correspondence only. We never met, but his letters reflecting the warmth of his friendship and his generous understanding have left a lasting impression on my mind. My experience in conducting some East-West explorations generally has been that even when barriers of language and race are surmounted, the frontiers of culture still mysteriously divide us. In Edward Osborn's letters even these dividing walls seemed to melt away. He encouraged me to join the S.P.R. in the